

[N.C. lawmakers receive flood of calls on debt](#) (Charlotte Observer – July 27, 2011)

By David Perlmutter and Curtis Tate

A day after President Barack Obama asked Americans to contact lawmakers and urge them to reach an accord on the debt-ceiling stalemate, North Carolinians did it - in big numbers. In U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry's office, staff members fielded three times more calls than normal. Opinions varied, but the central message: "Get a deal done," a spokesman for the Cherryville Republican said. Same was true in Republican Rep. Sue Myrick's Washington office - where staffers faced thousands of e-mails from constituents - and in the offices of at least half a dozen other N.C. lawmakers. "It's been very heavy on both sides, GOP and Dems," said Myrick, of Charlotte. "The switchboard has gone down because of all the calls. People have been all over the place on the issue. It's not one of those 'yes' or 'no' issues." The day of civic activism extended across the country. The Capitol, which typically handles 20,000 calls per hour, saw spikes of up to 40,000 Tuesday, rivaling the 50,000-an-hour rate of the health care debate. "Congress and Capitol Hill have been flooded, with e-mails and phones, switchboards are jammed, servers going down," said David Plouffe, the president's senior advisor. The heavy volume seemed to be directed more at Republicans. But the views of the N.C. delegation illustrate the House's sharp divide. Democrat Rep. **Mel Watt** of Charlotte said his office didn't get "an exorbitant" volume of calls. He talked to a few constituents - including a woman "who was upset when my staff told her I didn't have a clue how I was going to vote." "I told her it's true," **Watt** said. "I asked her, 'How can I tell you how I'm going to vote if I haven't seen a plan?'

Watt

said he's not privy to the discussions on raising the ceiling. "I think we've all acknowledged ... we need to figure out a way to get ourselves out of this bind and raise the debt ceiling,"

Watt

said. If the debt limit is not raised by Aug. 2, the government will exhaust its borrowing authority, which some economists say could ignite a financial panic. Obama and House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, are pushing rival plans that would raise the ceiling. Boehner favors a stopgap measure that would last through early next year. The president wants a plan that would last through the 2012 election. Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., of Farmville, said his constituents made their voices heard Tuesday. "It's been pretty busy," Jones said. "The poor interns are having a good time." He said the response was running slightly in favor of reaching a compromise, "but it's close." Jones said he was reviewing proposals. He was one of only nine Republicans to vote against his party's "Cut, Cap and Balance" proposal, which passed the House last week but failed in the Senate. U.S. Rep. Mick Mulvaney, an Indian Land, S.C., Republican who

co-authored the "Cut, Cap" plan, was unenthusiastic about Boehner's plan but stopped short of saying he'll vote against it. "I'm struggling with it, I'll be candid with you," Mulvaney told ABC News. "I'm not interested in doing a deal for the sake of doing a deal," he said. "We're actually trying to fix the spending difficulty. If this (Boehner) bill doesn't do that, then I would find it difficult to support it." Rep. Renee Ellmers, R-N.C., who voted for "Cut, Cap," said she supports the Boehner plan. Rep. Heath

Shuler, a Waynesville Democrat and one of five Democrats to vote for "Cut, Cap," said he's disappointed by the Boehner plan. "I believe it is fiscally irresponsible and nothing more than political posturing that threatens the economic security of our country," Shuler said.